

IDEAS AT *Work*

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

Slow cursor revs up with 'Cruise Control'

"Cruise Control" is an innovative new program for IBM PCs and PC-compatible computers that corrects two problems you probably didn't know you had.

Here's a test: Did you know that your cursor (the blinking spot on your computer screen) moves slower than its optimal speed, or that you commonly experience something called "cursor run-on?"

Well, according to the publishers of Cruise Control, Revolution Software Inc. of Randolph, N.J., your productivity is at stake; and not only should you be aware of the two problems, you should rush out and buy their \$29.95 solution.

The speed that the cursor moves on your computer screen is usually not something that users notice, so I was surprised to see that the publishers made a big deal about it in their literature. And "cursor run-on" was a term I had never heard of. So I accepted their challenge, installed the program on my favorite PC — an AT&T 6300 — and proceeded to see if it made any difference.

To my surprise, it did.

As I discovered, cursor run-on is the tendency of the cursor to remain in motion after a cursor key is released. The Cruise Control program uses a snazzy feature called Anti-Skid Braking, which senses the rate at which an application can accept keystrokes and adjusts the auto-repeat rate to match. The result, say the publishers of the program, is that the cursor stops the moment a key is released, not 16 cells to the right or several pages below. It could be a big help for users of Lotus 1-2-3, Symphony, dBASE III and other popular programs.

And, as I also found out, the speed that the cursor moves when you want to move around in a document directly affects how fast you can work. By speeding up the cursor with Cruise Control's adjustable feature, I began to zip along at a pace that I didn't think

was possible without buying a faster computer.

Here's how the program is set up and used:

✓ First, simply put the Cruise Control diskette in drive A and type "a:cruise." It's then loaded into your computer's memory, taking up less than 5K of space, and is available for use from then on.

✓ You'll immediately notice that the cursor moves faster whenever you are moving around in documents or spreadsheets. To make it go faster still, press the "5" key on the numeric pad and the "+" key simultaneously. To slow it down, press the "5" and the "." repeatedly.

✓ You'll also notice that you won't "get ahead" when moving from cell to cell in a spreadsheet or from page to page in a document. This allows you to easily predict where the cursor will stop if you are moving around, so you won't overshoot the mark.

In addition, Cruise Control contains several miscellaneous features that some people will find handy: a method to repeat the action of certain keys or key combinations, a way to insert the date or time into an application program at the current cursor position, and a way to dim the display screen automatically after a programmable time delay. The last feature will increase the longevity of your monitor if the monitor is on all the time.

The only negative feature encountered was that my keyboard locked up occasionally when the program was used with WordPerfect, version 4.1. I was not able to figure out why this sometimes happened, but was able to isolate the problem to just those times when Cruise Control was installed.

To sum up: In my testing of the program, I was pleasantly surprised with the good results. It was easy to install, the documentation was excellent, and it did, indeed, speed up my work. It's well worth the \$29.95 cost, in spite of the keyboard locking problem that's sometimes encountered.



Segal

Hillel Segal is an independent computer consultant who specializes in helping businesses select and use personal computer software and hardware. He can be reached at the Personal Computer Managers Association, P.O. Box 9003, Boulder 80301.